

NLRB Proposals: Reactions

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The National Labor Relations Board Tuesday [proposed the most sweeping changes to the federal rules governing union organizing elections since 1947](#), giving a boost to unions that have long called for the agency to give employers less time to fight representation votes.

Unions and their allies praised the proposal, saying it marked a long overdue modernization of the labor-organization process. Business groups and Republican lawmakers said the NLRB move to speed up votes in organizing efforts could deprive employers of their right to make a case to workers that union representation isn't needed.

Here's a sampling of reaction to the NLRB proposals.

"To ensure a strong economic recovery, America needs a strong middle class. A key part of rebuilding the middle class is ensuring that every American worker has the same right that powerful CEOs take for granted—the right to sign a contract ensuring fair treatment on the job. The National Labor Relations Board's modernized election rules take an important step forward in making this right a reality."

Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA), chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee

"CEOs should not fear a level playing field or fairer elections. They should embrace them. As history shows, when workers' rights are respected, our nation's families, businesses, and the economy win."

Rep. George Miller (D., Calif.), the senior Democrat on the House Committee on Education and the Workforce

"U.S. income inequality is the worst in 100 years. The gap between wages and productivity in the U.S. widens as workers are not able to bargain. The end result is an economic slowdown that will not end."

Larry Cohen, president of the Communications Workers of America

"When workers choose to vote to form a union on the job, the vote shouldn't be plagued by delays, bureaucracy or obstacles."

United Food and Commercial Workers Union

"With the proposal of these new standards, the Board is taking a modest step to remove roadblocks and reduce unnecessary and costly litigation—and that's good news for employers as well as employees. The proposed rule does not address many of the fundamental problems with our labor laws, but it will help bring critically needed fairness and balance to this part of the process."

Richard Trumka, president of labor federation AFL-CIO

"The same crowd that is trying to take away collective bargaining rights in the states is opposing a modest improvement to give workers a fairer, more standardized process for voting to join a union. The opposition favors the current system in which elections are frequently delayed and often never happen."

John Podesta, president and chief executive officer, Center for American Progress

CRITICS

"Today, my colleagues undertake an expedited rulemaking process in order to implement an expedited representation election process. Neither process is appropriate or necessary. Both processes, however, share a common purpose: to stifle full debate on matters that demand it, in furtherance of a belief that employers should have little or no involvement in the resolution of questions concerning representation. For my part at least, I can and do dissent."

Brian Hayes, the sole Republican on the four-member board.

"The NLRB seems determined to make the jobs picture worse. Encouraging 'quickie elections' will incentivize employers to send jobs overseas instead of creating them at home."

U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander (R, Tenn.)

"If employees want to unionize they should be allowed to do so, but to ram elections through before important questions are asked and answered does a disservice to everyone involved. This is just the latest outrage from a runaway agency."

Sen. Mike Enzi (R., Wyo.), ranking member on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee

"With the construction industry still facing more than 16 percent unemployment, now is the worst possible time for the Obama administration to create artificial hurdles to job creation."

Geoff Burr, vice president of federal affairs for the Associated Builders and Contractors

"There are many troubling aspects to this proposed rule, but perhaps the most important question to ask is—what's broken in the system they're trying to fix? In 2009, labor unions won 68.5 percent of representation elections. Furthermore, 95 percent of all elections are conducted within 56 days of the filing petition submitted by the union. In 2010, the average time from filing of the petition to election was 31 days. Again, what is the goal of the NLRB in proposing snap-elections?"

Joe Trauger, vice president for human resources policy at the National Association of Manufacturers

"This is another not so cleverly disguised effort to restrict the ability of employers to express their views during an election campaign, to inform employees of the pros and cons of unionization. These guttings of statutory rights, however disguised, will be strenuously opposed by the Chamber."

Randel Johnson, senior vice president of labor, immigration and employee benefits for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.